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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [GG](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: EU DEBATES NEXT STEPS ON GEORGIA

Classified By: Polmincouns Laurence Wohlers for reasons 1.5 (D) and (E)

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SUMMARY AND COMMENT

¶1. (C) On March 6, the European Council's Political and Security Committee (PSC) debated the recommendations of a joint Commission/Council Expert Team to Georgia led by EU Special Representative to the Caucasus Peter Semneby. Nordic, Central and East European Member States strongly supported the team's recommendations for strengthening and expanding EU technical support in Georgia and the conflict areas, but faced stiff opposition from Mediterranean countries led by Greece. NCE states also mustered little support from "old" Europe and the Germany Presidency. After a lengthy debate, PSC Ambassadors delegated further consideration of specific recommendations to lower-level expert working groups. End Given the lack of strong support from a major EU player (e.g., UK, France, or Germany) it looks as though debate over a beefed up EU presence in Georgia drag out indefinitely in various Council deliberative bodies. Consequently, one option is for the Commission to simply move forward independently with enhanced programming consistent with its existing mandate. Considerable senior staff turnover in DG RELEX and lack of strong champion elsewhere in the Commission institutions will make this problematic. Discussions here next week with DAS Bryza will be particularly in timely in this regard. End Summary and Comment.

¶2. (C/NF) The Political and Security Committee of the European Council met on March 6 to hear a formal presentation of the summary report of the EU Expert Team Mission to Georgia. Led by European Union Special Representative Peter Semneby (Sweden), the joint mission of Commission and Council policy experts traveled to Georgia in mandate to explore ways contribute to securisis and repage summary of sensitivutates underlined the needre carefully. In generQ agreed on the imporQlict Resolution Ministry; -- Keeping Russia inforQed; -- Enhancing the protection of the rights of all minorities in Georgia; -- Ensuring that contacts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia should go via Tbilisi; -- Pursuing demining activities; and -- Pursing measures related to economic rehabilitation, including of the railway through Abkhazia.

NCE Countries Seek Action

¶4. (C) According to one contact who attended the debate,

several member states, including Latvia, Poland, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Slovakia, stated that they could endorse, in general terms, all of the recommendations contained in the report. The Netherlands agreed in general terms with the options proposed but underlined the need for further consideration of some of the ideas. Lithuania's PSC Ambassador emphasized that the credibility of the EU was at stake in this exercise and that Georgia expected some action from the EU.

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But the Med Pushes Back

¶15. (C) Whereas Sweden and the UK expressed support for some of the recommendations in the report, they agreed with Denmark, on the need to study some of the recommendations in further detail. Mediterranean countries either raised concerns or opposed any concrete decisions outright. Representatives from Greece and Cyprus said they could not agree to the PSC undertaking any operational conclusions or concrete taskings. Two contacts who participated in the debate separately commented to us that Greek positions and rhetoric on Georgia were eerily similar to those of Russia. France counseled "prudence" and Portugal and Spain asked for "further study" with respect to nearly every recommendation of the expert team. According to a Council Secretariat source, the German Presidency did not attempt to steer the debate in any particular direction. A Baltic PSC Ambassador speculated that the unhelpful Cypriot stance was payback for the Lithuanian positions at the recent EU Defense Ministerial in Wiesebaden. Lithuania reportedly irritated Cyprus with its forward-leaning views on EU-NATO cooperation and negative views on establishing a permanent EU military headquarters.

For Georgia "proper": A Truth Commission?

¶16. (C) Under the rubric of strengthening the Georgian conflict resolution ministry, establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Poland agreed to this proposal. Sweden was open to the issue. Cyprus and Portugal expressed skepticism. Denmark asserted a TRC was "premature", and Greece was "very hesitant."

Nervousness over new measures in the breakaway regions

¶17. (C) JCC: Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, and Denmark supported the proposal for a Joint Control Commission for South Ossetia, possibly in Brussels. Portugal supported the idea so long as all parties in the JCC agreed.

8: (C) Police experts: Estonia, Lithuania and Poland were supportive of the team's proposal to co-locate a police expert with the OSCE in South Ossetia and another one with UNOMIG police component in Zugdidi. The Netherlands, Portugal, and Denmark were hesitant, France cautioned "prudence" (NFI); the UK and Sweden agreed, but pointed out the need for close cooperation with the OSCE and UN. Greece and Cyprus opposed the proposal; Cyprus called it a "mini-ESDP mission."

¶19. (C) Customs: Poland, the UK, Estonia, Sweden and Lithuania supported the expert team's proposals to detail a customs expert to Georgia in order to develop a customs project to promote capacity building and legal trade across the administrative borders of Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. France expressed interest and agreed with the report's analysis of the problem of certification of origin of products, but warned against any attempt to transform such a project into an EU Border Assistance Mission for Georgia. Cyprus was reticent. Greece cautioned against any kind of involvement in issues related to Russia-Georgia talks on Russian accession to the WTO.

¶10. (C) Border management: Several NCE countries supported the team's proposals to revise the mandate of the EUSR in

order for the EUSR Border Support Team to deal with issues related to Georgia's conflict areas. Again, France cautioned "prudence."

¶11. (C) Opening of new EU information centers in Soukhumi and Tskhinvali: Latvia agreed, but Greece raised concerns.

¶12. (C) Greece also asserted that some of the measures proposed were not short term but actually long-term measures or even a "strategy towards Georgia." As such, Greece argued that the EU should be extremely careful in this respect. Greece also alerted to the need not to engage in activities that could be perceived as "an attempt to change the existing negotiating formats."

Follow up Action

¶13. (C) Cyprus and Greece were also opposed to any kind of tasking to the Civilian Crisis Response Committee (CIVCOM). Eventually the PSC agreed to "invite" CIVCOM to "look into relevant parts of the report." The PSC also tasked COEST working-level experts to consider the long version of the report in more detail and respond to the PSC "as soon as possible." (Note: COEST capitals-based experts are planning to devote their April 25 meeting to the Caucasus/Black Sea

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issues.)

GRAY

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